

The Physics of Friendship

Courtesy of The Internet School of Magic

Everyone wants meaningful, lasting, drama-free, deep friendships with people they can value and respect. However, many people struggle with friendships which are labile, disrespectful, or full of drama.

Drama, which is one good translation of *samsara*, is that uncomfortable business that occurs between friends when they are taking things too seriously, and when the continuation of the friendship appears to be in jeopardy and one or both friends are flailing to avoid an end.

This pamphlet will outline a complete physics of friendship that explains why and when friendships stumble and fail (discontinue or attenuate), and how to build a friendship which will be, essentially, “verified” against future instability. This method cannot usually save floundering friendships—it must be enacted as a preventative and friendship-deepening measure in advance of any serious difficulties. In rare cases, a friendship in jeopardy could be rescued if the friend who is forming a negative vision of the other person “comes to their senses” by learning or realizing the physics described in this pamphlet (or some equivalent formulation). Doing such a thing—making an effort to revise our opinion of someone from “out-group/other/outsider/alien/valueless” to “in-group/peer/insider/filial/valued”, so that we can continue to feel empathy with them, is the very definition of compassion—that moment of the outpouring of our heart through our broken-down walls to the Other.

The Gift of Security

The root of all problems in friendships (and relationships) begins in a feeling of insecurity experienced by one or both friends. This feeling of insecurity can be traced to three sources, three timescales:

- Insecure attachment habits developed in childhood,

due to abandonment or unreliable care and mirroring by caregivers. Those caregivers usually experienced the same hot-and-cold affection in their own childhood, so insecure attachment is a form of generational trauma. It is extremely tragic, because it can only be healed by a gift of security given by a compassionate friend, which are hard to find for someone displaying insecure attachment behaviors.

- Devaluation of the other by one or both friends. We want friends who we value, but when we make this requirement, we enter into a game where we are always judging and valuing each other. The feeling of being appraised as less-than-valuable is *always* palpable and directly triggers insecure attachment behavior, which then prompts a vicious cycle in the friendship (a distancing-seduction dialectic).
- A lack of a commitment to the friendship. In other words, the friendship is not based in unconditional love, but is conditional based upon appraisal of value of each friend by the other. These friendships are temporary, not lifelong, by their very nature of being based in ever-changing value appraisals.

To summarize, there are two types of friendship: Drama-based insecure friendships, and commitment-based secure friendships. The quick and easy way to completely resolve the complex dramas and issues in a friendship is for both parties to commit, honestly from the heart, to its continuation. This commitment cannot be made lightly or faked, because it is essentially a commitment to continue the friendship and valuation of the other indefinitely, for the foreseeable future—it’s lifelong.

The Alchemy of Appreciation

Appreciation is taking something you don’t see the value in, and finding a way to see value in it. This harkens back to the etymological meaning of the word, but nowadays, someone might say “I don’t *appreciate* your tone”, meaning they don’t like it and take offense, or, “I can’t *appreciate* this art”, meaning they haven’t looked at

it for very long. However, according to my definition, neither of these people have even tried to appreciate the thing they are deriding!

Appreciating takes effort. To appreciate an object is to transmute that same object from lead into gold. Appreciation is the alchemist’s secret, and it can be a gift we give constantly to all phenomena.

How do we appreciate something? There are many little tricks that can be learned, such as letting our attention rest on the object and noting positive characteristics, listing novel observations of worth or beauty. Or, we can look at our negative evaluations and critique them, find the flaws in them, and thereby disempower their hold on our perception of the object. Or, we can ask others how they perceive the object and why they like it or think it is beautiful. I am thinking here both of art and of people.

Everyone and everything, every perspective and every opinion that anyone holds has at least some value and beauty. It is our job as compassionate observers to dig that value out so that we can experience the beauty of an object of our perception, rather than its ugliness.

When we have committed to a friendship, maintaining this commitment involves ongoing work to keep our perception of the other person positive. If it begins to slip, it is equally our responsibility to change our perception as for them to address the flaw we can see.

The Horror of Dialectics

Friends, if they are courageous enough to make the decision to love our flaws, can help us to heal more than anything else. However, before this decision is made in each context (each flaw), there can be a period of indecision, vagueness, and awkwardness as the wound gradually emerges between the two friends as a dialectic.

The core dialectic, that of intimacy, is a conflict between developing intimacy to a stable coherence, versus retreating from intimacy. Dialectics are always two-sided—our friends come to us via synchronicity and stick to us via our decisions because our wounds are

complementary—our wounded psychological and emotional patterns fit together like puzzle pieces, producing codependent patterns that are stable and smooth-running, but unhealthy.

When one friend is trying to grow out of a wound, that smoothness begins to break down, and a dialectic can rear its ugly head. This dialectic might be a seduction-distancing dialectic, in which one friend tries to increase intimacy and the other avoids it; it might be a teacher-student dialectic (proselytization dialectic), in which one friend thinks they have something to “teach” the other; it might be an agree-disagree dialectic, where one friend attempts to bring out commonality and the other friend attempts to draw boundaries of distinction.

These are just a few dialectics I have seen, that I am prone to. In each case, the “approaching” friend is valuing the other highly, or absolutely, and the latter “avoiding” friend is attempting to postpone or delimit intimacy, to not hear what their friend wants to say, or to pick and choose parts of their friend to accept or reject. These things are fine, but avoiding the meta-conversation where these boundaries are negotiated is what causes an unpleasant dialectic. A friend will usually suppress all speech which might contradict their assumption of valuelessness and force a reappraisal—and then often go on to claim that it is the “approaching” friend who is creating limitations.

Dialectics are Fun and Easy to Fix

Not only is there no such thing as a dialectic in a friendship—they are just programs both friends agree to participate in continuously—but the completion and overcoming of a dialectic is fun, fast, and easy, and produces an incredible amount of healing for both friends. It is best to simply complete dialectics immediately by bringing them to explicitness and talking them to completion in a archetypal Dialogue (which take incredibly intriguing forms). Talking about conflicts becomes possible when the friendship is already secure in commitment from both sides. Talking through the painful is-

ues which underlie a dialectic may be unpleasant, but if it is approached head-on, those discussions take only a few minutes, once (plus occasional reassuring words).

It is my opinion that the side which is distancing, avoiding, and repressing discussion of the dialectic is almost always more in control of the dialectic’s completion or painful prolongation. The dialectic can be endlessly extended by their avoidance, but resolved only by confrontation or a sad and permanent crippling and diminution of the friendship (in self-suppression).

The “aggressor”, for their part, can develop restraint and turn away from the dialectic, waiting patiently for the avoider to heal enough to come closer; or they can sever their love in the friendship and become only coldly half-invested. Neither of these are good options—the desperate dialectical aggression of the approacher is a desperate cry for healing, made by someone wandering weeping past closed doors.

A Thing in Common

“To do so, the minimal link of a *thing in common* had to be established between himself and them,” writes Rancière in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*. A shared object (a ‘text’ abstractly) allows two friends to literally *come to terms* and agree upon the extent and ideal vehicle of activities (*curriculum*) of the friendship. This thing in common grounds the friendship and makes it physically objective and discussable. It can help to lift the repression of political talk surrounding the negotiation of terms of the friendship. This pamphlet could be used as such.

Often, one friend will systematically invalidate the other and refuse all attempts to agree upon a thing in common (and then suggest that it is the other who is defecting or stalling the friendship). This is, again, a lack of commitment and courage—which is fine, but it is not what will develop or forwardly-heal a friendship.

Our True Non-Self in the Other

We all suffer from multiple personality aspects, which vie for possession of our body and our speech.

When we switch aspects, our perspective changes, and we forget what the previous aspect knew. The apparent value of people (and all objects) will also change when we switch from one vantage-track to another. This happens constantly (and resembles the TV series *Dollhouse*). When we commit to a friend, we are committing to *who they truly are*, which is both *none and all* of their personality aspects, the beautiful and unique intelligence or genius which orders their thought (thought being the movement between aspects). This is the most gorgeous affirmation of another person that we can give—“I know this is just part of you, and I see and love all of you.”

Recovering Karmic Lovers

When we reject a friend instead of completing a dialectic with them, we are bound to find another friend later who fills that same niche in our ecosystem of dysfunction. Then, we will be faced with the same dialectic again in the new friend, because that dialectic is still incomplete in myself, and so I drew another complementary puzzle-piece towards me. As long as I fail to take the courageous and difficult—but surprisingly easy step of sitting down for a few minutes to work things out and affirm my love for you, I will continually reject people whenever they push that particular button.

You can see this as the universe attempting to provide you a life-partner for each of your defects—the friend which can heal that particular defect *is* that defect, physically personified. The best we can hope for is a friend who is self-aware in their role as a compassionate healer and representative of your subconscious vulnerability, a friend who treads softly, as best they can, to avoid stepping on the flowers as they go to get the watering can.

You can also apply the concept of friendship in this pamphlet to befriending yourself.

—Deicidus

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